DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 351 118 PS 020 806

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TITLE Fingerplays: An Idea from the Past with Learning Opportunities for the Present and Future.
PUB DATE Apr 92
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Childhood Education International (100th, Chicago, IL, April 22-25, 1992).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Creative Activities; Dramatic Play; Early Childhood Education; Language Enrichment; *Learning Activities; Selection; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Fingerplays; Rhyme

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a guide to the selection and use of finger plays with children. Finger plays are defined as brief stories that rhyme and can be dramatized by fingers. After touching briefly on the origins of finger plays, the paper lists several uses for this activity, including motivating students, introducing new themes or units, and developing listening and language skills. Criteria to consider when selecting finger plays, such as learning expectations and the time of year and day, are listed. Specific steps to follow when presenting finger plays are also listed, and materials for illustrating finger plays are suggested. The remainder of the paper presents several finger play rhymes, with instructions on their use. (HTH)

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Fingerplays: An Idea from the Past with Learning Opportunities for the Present and Future.

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by

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Fingerplays are brief stories that rhyme and can be dramatized by the fingers. They are an old activity for children. Action rhymes using the fingers can be traced to Indian lore before Columbus arrived in North America, and in Rome of 50 AD there is evidence that children played a finger game (Scott, 1983).

Perhaps fingerplays are best identified with Froebel and the first kindergarten. In the book, Fingerplays for Nursery and Kindergarten published in 1893, Emilie Poulsson quotes Froebel as saying, "What the child imitates, he begins to understand". Today this idea of the past continues to delight and fascinate young children and provide optimum learning opportunities.

There are a variety of fingerplays. These can be used to develop language skills, experiences with mathematics, follow direction, increase attention span, cooperate with others and experience rhythmic enjoyment.

Uses of Fingerplays

Fingerplays can be used to:

-provide transitions

-motivate

-relax

-introduce theme or unit

-provide theme for integrating skills and concepts

-provide for a project

-begin group time

-develop listening

-develop language

-develop number and counting

-work with order and sequence

-develop self esteem

-develop coordination

-encourage discussion

-follow directions

-encourage cooperation

Selection of Finger plays

Attention should be given to selection of fingerplays for children. Consider the following when making selections for young children:

1. Developmental Level of the Children
2. Purpose of the Fingerplay
3. Objectives of the Fingerplay
4. Learning Expectations
5. Topic or Unit of Study
6. Time of the Year and Day
7. Length of the Rhyme
8. Size of the Group
9. Space in the Learning Environment
10. Materials needed

Presenting Fingerplays

In presenting a fingerplay, it is necessary to become thoroughly familiar with the rhyme. Memorize the rhyme if possible or print on a card for easy use. It could be helpful to make a chart with the rhyme and include illustrations for the rhyme. This could also enhance reading experiences.

Consider the following steps when presenting finger plays:

1. Introduce the finger play to the children by saying rhyme and using the finger movements. Use media if appropriate.
2. Invite the children to repeat the rhyme and repeat one line at a time.
3. Repeat again using finger movements.
4. Continue to use the rhyme during the day and during the study.
5. Present extended learning activities with the rhyme.
6. Encourage children to share the rhyme with parents or "important others" in their home.

Remember that not all children will participate the first time. Some will observe and later join the group.

Materials for Fingerplays

Most fingerplays can be illustrated with different materials to extend learning experiences. Children can illustrate the rhyme or the teacher can make materials to use in the learning experience. These suggestions present ideas for developing a variety of materials.

-make finger puppets

-make characters form the rhyme and attach to a stick or straw for a puppet

-attach characters in finger play to a straw. Place straw in a styrofoam cup by making a hole the size of the straw in the bottom cup. This makes a "pop-up puppet" to use to illustrate the rhyme. Children can use this in dramatization of the rhyme.

-make paper bag puppets
Example: bears, frogs, clowns, elephants

-make characters in the rhyme and glue to the fingers of a glove

-make characters and glue to clothes pins. As rhyme is repeated attach/remove to/from clothes line or a coat hanger.

-Enlarge characters of the rhyme for body puppets. Use with dramatization.

-make objects to illustrate rhyme for the felt or magnetic board.

-make big books to illustrate rhyme

-construct "plastic bag" books. Illustrate the rhyme and put pages into plastic freezer bags. Staple and tape side of the bags. Place in the library center.

Fingerplays

The following fingerplays can provide experiences to use in developing learning opportunities. Suggested materials are listed. Each rhyme can motivate learning, or introduce a concept. The rhymes can develop listening and auditory discrimination. Experiences with number, counting, and order and sequence are evident. Opportunities to enhance language experience, coordination, following directions and cooperation

are included in each rhyme. Many of the rhymes are appropriate for transitions, or to introduce a unit, theme or project.

Going to School

Five happy children going to school.
The first child said, "I'll follow the rules."
The second child said, "I'll listen and look."
The third child said, "I'll read a book."
The fourth child said, "I'll run and play."
The fifth child said, "I'm glad I came today."
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Materials/Suggestion: Make finger puppets or stick puppets to use with dramatization.

Five Butterflies

Five pretty butterflies flying by my door,
One flew away,
And now there are four.

Four pretty butterflies, pretty as can be,
One flew away,
And now there are three.

Three pretty butterflies flying by you,
One flew away,
And now there are two.

Two pretty butterflies flying in the sun,
One flew away,
And now they are all gone.
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Materials/Suggestion: Make butterflies by using the plastic holders from a six pack of soft drinks and tying together with a black pipe cleaner. The plastic can be colored with permanent felt pens.

Five Little Monkeys

Five little monkeys playing on the floor,
One ran away and then there were four.

Four little monkeys hanging in a tree,
One ran away and then there were three.

Three little monkeys living in the zoo,
One ran away and then there were two.

Two little monkeys sitting in the sun,
One ran away and then there was one.

One little monkey left all alone,
It ran away, and now they're all gone.

Materials/Suggestion: Make sequence cards, a big book, or a monkey tree.

Monkeys in the Zoo

One brown monkey living in the zoo,
Here comes another, and now there are two.

Two brown monkeys sitting in a tree,
Here comes another, and now there are three.

Three brown monkeys playing by the door,
Here comes another, and now there are four.

Four brown monkeys jump and hop and dive,
Here comes another, and now there are five.

Five brown monkeys playing in the zoo,
Five brown monkeys looking at you.

Materials/Suggestion: Make five monkeys and glue on clothes pins; hang on clothes line or coat hanger when rhyme is repeated.

Five Little Kittens

Five little kittens ran by the door,
One ran away and then there were four.

Four little kittens playing with me,
One ran away and then there were three.

Three little kittens playing by you,
One ran away and then there were two.

Two little kittens playing in the sun,
One ran away and then there was one.

One little kitten on a sunny day,
One little kitten ran away.

Materials/Suggestion: Make cut outs for the felt board or magnetic board or bring toy kittens for the children.

Snowflakes

Five little snowflakes falling down.
(make hand motion from above head to floor)

The first one said, "I'm touching the ground."
(point to thumb)

The second one said, "I didn't make a sound."
(point to first finger)

The third one said, "I'm fluffy and white."
(point to second finger)

The fourth one said, "I'm a pretty sight."
(point to third finger)

The fifth one said, "The sun is bright."
(point to fourth finger)

Then all five snowflakes vanished out of sight.
(place hand to back)
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Materials/Suggestion: Make a pop-up puppet with paper lace, straw, and styrofoam cup. Cut out from paper lace. Draw a face if desired. Tape to a straw. Make a hole in the bottom of cup. Slide the straw in with design fitting into the cup.

Teddy Bears

Five little teddy bears ready to play.
(hold up right hand)

The first one said, "Let's have a happy day."
(move thumb)

The second one said, "I'm ready for some fun."
(move first finger)

The third one said, "I can see the sun."
(move second finger)

The fourth one said, "I will play with Mary."
(move third finger)

The fifth one said, "I will play with Jerry."
(move fourth or little finger)

Five little teddy bears ready to play.
(hold up right hand)

Five little teddy bears ran away.
(place hand behind you and repeat rhyme with left hand)
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Materials/Suggestion: Make bear faces and glue to the finger of a glove.

Clowns

Five funny clowns in a row.
(hold up hand)

The first clown bowed to the people so.
(bend thumb)

The second clown ran a race.
(move first finger)

The third clown had a funny face.
(move second finger)

The fourth clown jumped in a ring.
(move third finger)

The fifth clown began to sing.
(move fourth finger)

Five funny clowns in a row.
(hold up hand)

They wave good-bye, and it's time to go.
(wave hand)
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Materials/Suggestion: Make clown mask with paper bags or paper plates.

Conclusion

Fingerplays are an idea from the past, but they continue to provide a variety of learning opportunities for young children. Young children enjoy rhythm, rhyme and word play as presented through action rhymes using the fingers. Fingerplays enhance movement, listening, cooperation and verbal skills, and they can be planned directed activities or spontaneous

experiences.

Attention should be given in selection and presentation of fingerplays, and there are a variety of sources to assist in selecting rhymes for various occasions. Construction of materials to illustrate the rhyme can enhance and extend the learning experience.

Fingerplays continue to be a delightful experience for young children. They are an idea from the past with learning opportunities for the present and future.

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